

Hunt called recruiter for secret Panama mission

Miami (KNT)—Manuel F. Artime, the Miami importer once known as the "golden boy of the CIA," has told Watergate investigators that E. Howard Hunt, Jr. attempted in 1971 to recruit him and other Cuban exiles for a clandestine mission to Panama.

According to sources close to the investigation, Mr. Artimo has testified that Hunt, a convicted Watergate conspirator, told him "something had to be taken care of in Panama" and said the mission would be carried out after President Nixon's 1972 re-election.

Ellis Rubin, Mr. Artimo's attorney, has confirmed that Mr. Artimo testified in Washington last weekend before the Watergate grand jury. Mr. Rubin said that Mr. Artimo's testimony involved Hunt, formerly of the Central Intelligence Agency, and that "certain ground rules were established to enable him [Artimo] to testify rather than to take the Fifth Amendment."

Part of the agreement, Mr. Rubin said, was that Mr. Artimo "was asked not to discuss

anything with anybody."

From other sources close to the investigation, however, the Miami *Herald* learned that Mr. Artimo has told investigators that:

- The secret mission involved illegal narcotics, which Hunt said were being smuggled into the United States with assistance from the Panamanian government.

- Hunt asked Mr. Artimo to go to Panama and to recruit other Miamians for the mission. According to Mr. Artimo, he neither went nor recruited

anyone.

- Hunt discussed the matter with Mr. Artimo after July, 1971,

Mr. Artimo, who began his career as a psychiatrist in Cuba and later became a poet, then Fidel Castro's first agrarian reform manager in Oriente province, and finally an enemy of the Communist prime minister, reportedly has admitted involvement in an unsuccessful plot to assassinate Mr. Castro in 1965 and in 1966.